

# ***IOWA OUTDOORS***

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **TROUT HEADING TO SCOTT COUNTY LAKE OCT. 20**

DAVENPORT – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will stock 1,500 catchable sized rainbow trout at Lake of the Hills in West Lake Park around 10:30 a.m., on Oct. 20. The DNR will also release a few large broodstock trout in the 57-acre lake. This is the second year trout have been stocked during the cool weather months at Lake of the Hills.

The trout are raised at the Manchester hatchery. Anglers who want to fish for the trout are required to purchase a trout stamp (\$11) in addition to an Iowa fishing license. The daily bag limit for trout is five and the possession limit is 10.

**For more information, contact Don Kline at 319-694-2430.**

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## **FLOODING CLOSES RIVERTON AREA FOR SATURDAY DUCK OPENER**

RIVERTON – The Riverton Wildlife Area in Fremont County will be inaccessible for hunting when the duck season opens on Saturday.

Torrential rainfall in southwest Iowa was over County Road J-46 on Monday as well as other roads used to access the approximately 2,700 acre wildlife complex at Riverton.

“By noon (Monday), the walk-in area at Riverton was under 10 feet of water and it had not crested yet,” according to DNR Biologist Carl Priebe.

Although many other rivers in southwest Iowa have crested by Tuesday, there is a good chance for more rain in the area on Wednesday.

The Riverton area was expected to be used by at least 200 to 250 waterfowl hunters this weekend had it not been for the flooding.

No other wildlife areas in southwest Iowa have reported being inaccessible due to flooding, according to DNR Wildlife Supervisor Angi Bruce.

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## **CAMPERS AND PARK USERS BENEFIT FROM STATE PARK IMPROVEMENTS**

DES MOINES – It’s the off season in Iowa’s state parks and park use is lighter, the campground has fewer guests and the leaves are starting to fall. On the surface everything seems to be slowing down. But work for the 2008 camping and park use season is already underway.

One of the most anticipated projects is underway at the WaShawtee addition in Waubonsie State Park and it just may reshape the outdoor experience in southwest Iowa. The project involves turning the old buildings that were part of the former girl scouts camp into cabins.

“You can sit on your own porch and all you see is prairie and woods,” said Angela Corio, landscape architect for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “It’s your own little piece of heaven.”

The cabins, named Infirmary, Lane Lodge, Kahiga Cabin, Shagbark Cabin, Hideway, Cooks Cabin and Mischanka, are located along a ridge top offering secluded, scenic views of the Loess Hills. Many of the cabins have stone fireplaces, covered decks, individual fire rings and private privies. Cabins will sleep anywhere from four to 10 people and will eventually be available for reservation through the DNR website. Once all are completed, there will be five camping cabins and five family cabins. Rents will range from \$35 on up to \$125 per night and some will be open all year.

“We have two camping cabins completed which are available to rent right now, and would be excellent cabins for hunters wanting the solitary experience during our upcoming seasons,” Corio said.

While the cabin renovations are exciting for the future, other projects completed in 2007 had immediate and major impacts on park use and enjoyment as well.

Campgrounds in Prairie Rose and Black Hawk state parks underwent major facelifts last spring and were re-opened for use mid-summer.

The Prairie Rose project included replacing the old water distribution system, upgrading 61 existing electrical campsites to 50 amp service, converting 16 non-electric campsites to 50 amp electric sites, and adding seven sites that will offer full hook ups, which includes water, sewer and electricity.

“We added rock covered living spaces and new fire rings to all 77 of the camping pads,” Corio said.

Another project at Prairie Rose soon to be underway will install a new road near the campground where camping cabins will be constructed this winter. The road project is estimated at \$154,866. The DNR is partnering with the Friends of Prairie Rose to fund the cabin project.

The DNR invested \$200,000 to renovate and upgrade the 30-acre campground at Black Hawk State Park which changed the face of the campground. The upgrade increased the size of the individual campsites and increased the number of electrical sites from 68 to 89, with each site now offering 50 amp electrical service. Of those 89 sites, 11 are pull-through and have individual water hydrants as well as new electrical service.

The project did reduce the overall number of campsites from 176 to 128, but the campground now has a more spacious feel to it. The additional room between campsites allows for larger vehicles with camper slide-outs. All 89 electrical sites have crushed stone surface.

The project included a new campground water distribution system and new fire rings to each campsites, replacing the existing water hydrants and added two new drinking water fountains at the shower building.

Other projects included wastewater system improvements at Lacey Keosauqua, Lake Darling, Pleasant Creek and Big Creek, a de-ironing silt basin and new drinking water system at Wilson Island and a drinking water system upgrade at Springbrook. Stone State Park was closed during all of 2007 for a new shower building and the upgrade of the electrical and wastewater systems.

Trails received much needed work at Pine Lake, Pleasant Creek, and Ledges including the ADA trail at the Ledge’s Lost Lake. The flood and silt damage at Dance

Hall Cave in Maquoketa State Park on July 3 was cleared of debris, although the lighting has yet to be restored.

New playgrounds were installed at Brushy Creek and Lake Macbride and one will open in the spring of 2008 at Beeds Lake.

A four-season lodge with indoor seating for 200, plus a covered outdoor patio that can seat an additional 50 is currently under construction at Lake Darling State Park, as part of a larger beach development. The beach complex will also feature a playground, beach shelter and a beach restroom close to the water. All facilities in the complex will be connected with a universally accessible sidewalk.

The Friends of Lake Darling raised nearly \$900,000 through a grant, donations from local communities, individual private donations, volunteer labor, special fundraising events, and a state appropriation. The DNR added \$100,000.

Geode will soon have a combination open air shelter-restroom building with an enclosed kitchenette under construction. A park road replacement project is nearing completion. A large playground will also be constructed on the beach that will emphasize universally accessible play elements.

An open air shelter was installed near the playground at Elk Rock, which was paid for by funds raised locally, and the local friends group at Nine Eagles installed a new shelter in the equestrian campground.

Improvements coming in 2008 include replacing the sewer lines at Clear Lake State Park; Bellevue and AA Call will receive new drinking water systems. Green Valley will see a major redevelopment. The lake will be lowered and fish population renovated, the electrical system will be upgraded, the shower building will be replaced and a pit toilet for winter camping will be constructed. Anglers at Summerset State Park will enjoy the benefits of a shoreline trail enhancement project set for 2008.

The long awaited development of a campground at Volga, Iowa's second largest recreation area, is coming Spring 2008. Construction will include a sewage treatment facility, a new well and electrical service. Drinking water will then be available at the boat ramp and lakeshore picnic shelter as well as in the new campground. After this \$750,000 initial phase, the utilities will be completed and the campground will be available for non-modern camping mid-summer. The next phase will include a shower building, restrooms and children's playground.

**For more information, contact Corio at 515-281-4579.**

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## **MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA**

GARNER – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing to designate the public and private land in an area encompassing the Eagle Lake Wetland Complex as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The DNR has scheduled a public meeting to discuss the proposal at 6:30 p.m., October 24, at the ISU Extension office, at the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> St. and Allen, in Garner.

“We are working with many partners to establish Bird Conservation Areas to embrace the concept of all-bird conservation,” said Doug Harr, coordinator for the DNR’s wildlife diversity program. “Recent bird research within the Eagle Lake Wetlands complex supports the idea that sustainable bird populations require conservation efforts at a landscape level. The partnership between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners is key to creating large expanses of bird habitat and reversing the trend of decreasing bird populations.”

According to local DNR wildlife biologist, Greg Hanson, this particular wetland complex is one of the state’s top four priority areas containing the highest concentration of remaining native prairie wetlands. “Plus it provides important habitat for all resident and migratory birds, game and nongame birds alike, which inhabit both grasslands and wetlands,” Hanson said.

“Designating a Bird Conservation Area helps draw attention to the needs of birds that are in trouble, and it allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds,” said Bruce Ehresman, biologist with the wildlife diversity program. “Grassland birds, in particular, are in trouble, and declining species such as black tern, American bittern, king rail, sedge wren, and bobolink all will benefit from the creation of the Eagle Lake Wetlands Bird Conservation Area.”

Typically, the core area of each BCA consists of a significant amount of public land, land owned by private conservation organizations or land protected by conservation easements, and it is important for areas around this core to be managed for good wildlife habitat.

“Since most of that property is privately held, landowners or land managers who would like to assist with all-bird conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance. Participation is voluntary and there will be no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner,” Harr said.

The meeting is open to the public.

**For more information, contact Harr at 515-281-4815 or Ehresman at 515-432-2823.**

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## **EARLY MUZZLELOADER DEER HUNTING SEASON IS OPEN**

While December means firearm deer seasons for most Iowa hunters, up to 7,500 individuals will begin their firearms season as early as October 13. Last Saturday, the nine day early muzzleloader deer season got underway.

Warmer weather this fall means hunters will most likely have biting insects to contend with as well as plenty of foliage. At this time of the year, with their winter coats growing in, the animals become increasingly sensitive to temperatures that are above normal. The cold front during the week of October 8 made temperatures more seasonable and should result in increased deer movement. Hopefully, this pattern will continue into the muzzleloader season.

By mid-October, bachelor groups of bucks are breaking up with mature buck associations dissolving first. Now is the time when older bucks can seemingly disappear for the few weeks preceding the rut. Plentiful food supplies, moderate temperatures, and experience with the upcoming rut instinctively cause these animals to become more inactive and to build bodily reserves.

Stands that take advantage of the presence of local food resources such as corn or acorns, or that cover trails to nearby bedding areas will serve the hunter best during this time of the year. Hunters using tree stands should inspect all of their gear to make sure it is in good condition and is working properly. Hunters should never get into a tree stand without using a safety harness.

Muzzleloader hunters using a ground blind are not required to display a blaze orange marking that is visible from all directions; this new regulation is a new requirement for ground blinds during the two shotgun seasons.

Surveys indicate that, in general, portions of northwest, north central, and central Iowa have deer populations similar to 2006 levels while populations in northeast, southeast, south central, and southwest Iowa have deer populations that are stable to increasing when compared to 2006 surveys. In areas of Iowa that have abundant deer populations, hunters can help farmers and landowners by harvesting antlerless deer during the season. This will help reduce the deer herds towards the desired population objectives. Hunters can also use the HUSH program to donate deer to the Iowa Food Bank and provide needed meat for Iowans.

License holders for the youth deer season who did not harvest a deer are eligible to use the license and unused tag during the early muzzleloader season. However, the youth hunter must follow the firearm restrictions during the season, a muzzleloading rifle or muzzleloading handgun only, and be under the direct supervision of an adult mentor.

Hunting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. All deer harvested need to be reported using the harvest reporting system by midnight following the day the deer is recovered. This is the second year where hunters have reported their kill. They can call the toll free number (1-800-771-4692) or use the DNR website ([www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)) to report their kill. This year they can also report at the license vendor. For hunters with Internet access, online reporting of the harvest is probably the easiest way to register your deer. Last year early muzzleloader hunters reported harvesting 5,555 deer. A little over half of the deer harvested were antlerless. The harvest reports are a vital piece of information Iowa DNR biologists need for properly managing Iowa's deer population and hunting opportunities.

**For more information, contact Tom Litchfield, wildlife biologist, at (641) 774-2958.**

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